15th October

Category: **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

B. GS 2 Related

1. Israel's missile defence shield

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's Interests

Prelims: Israel's missile defence shield

Context: Iron Dome The highly effective missile defence system shot down many rockets fired by Hamas on October 7, but some of them landed in populated areas. While Iron Dome has previously boasted high interception rates, there is uncertainty about its performance in the current conflict due to the overwhelming number of rockets fired.

The Iron Dome:

- Israel's Iron Dome is a highly effective missile defense system designed to intercept rockets, mortars, and artillery shells. Developed by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems of Israel, this system plays a crucial role in safeguarding Israeli citizens from aerial threats.
- **Short-Range Defense:** Iron Dome is a short-range missile defense system with an intercept range of 2.5 to 43 miles, designed to protect populated areas from incoming projectiles.
- **Modularity and Mobility:** Israel has strategically deployed at least 10 Iron Dome batteries, which can be moved as threats change, making it adaptable and highly mobile.
- **U.S. Collaboration:** The U.S. has provided substantial financial support to Israel for Iron Dome, with a co-production agreement in place. This collaboration includes the manufacture of Tamir interceptors (known as SkyHunter in the U.S.).
- Iron Dome's targeting system and radar first track the trajectory of incoming projectiles and are designed to fire its Tamir interceptors only at those which are likely to land in populated areas or important areas/targets. In the past, Israel has put Iron Dome's interception rate at as high as 97%.

The Iron Fortress:

- **Layered Air Defense:**
  - **Israel's missile defense network includes four layers:** Iron Dome (short range), David's Sling (low to mid-range), Arrow II (upper-atmospheric), and Arrow III (exo-atmospheric).
  - The U.S. has provided considerable financial support for these defense systems, with the cooperation dating back to 2011.

The Indian Angle:

- Israel has an extensive presence in the Indian military ecosystem, especially in air defence. In the past, Iron Dome was pitched to India to tackle threats from across the Line of Control (LoC), especially by terrorist groups.
- However, it did not fructify as India does not face such extremely close range threats. Instead, the Indian military had expressed interest in the Arrow system. Eventually, India procured some air defence elements and radars to take forward its indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence system.

Nut Graf: Iron Dome is a critical component of Israel's defense strategy, providing protection against short-range aerial threats. Its adaptability, mobility, and collaboration with the U.S. demonstrate its importance. To ensure its continued effectiveness, further

improvements in interception rates and international cooperation are essential. As adversaries evolve their tactics, Israel's missile defense systems will continue to be analyzed and upgraded to maintain the safety of its citizens.

Category: **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

1. Centre seeks inclusion of traditional medicine on WHO's list

Syllabus: Issues related to the development and management of the social sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Mains: Significance of inclusion of India's traditional medicine on WHO's list

Context: The Indian government is taking a significant step to elevate the status of traditional Indian medicine, particularly Ayurveda, by seeking inclusion in the 11th revision of the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD). This move aims to provide a standardized language and recognition on the global stage for traditional systems of medicine.

The Opportunity:

- **Recognition and Standardization:** Traditional Indian systems of medicine, including Ayurveda, lack standardized international recognition, making it challenging to integrate them into mainstream healthcare and research.
- **Evidence-Based Information**: To regulate traditional medicine effectively and integrate it into the healthcare system, there's a need for standardized, evidence-based information.
- **Integration Challenges**: Integrating traditional medicine into the conventional healthcare system requires a common classification standard.
- **Common Language:** The ICD serves as a global common language for healthcare professionals to share standardized information. Inclusion in the ICD would enable standardization in the reporting and diagnosis of traditional medicine conditions.
- **Research and Evaluation:** The traditional medicine chapter in ICD-11 is a crucial step in integrating traditional medicine into conventional medical standards. It also facilitates research and evaluation to establish the efficacy of these systems.
- **Regulation and Integration:** Inclusion in the ICD can help meet the growing demand for better regulation and integration of traditional medicine into mainstream healthcare and health information systems.

Way Forward:

- **Timely Inclusion:** The government aims to include Module-2 for Ayurveda in the ICD by January. Timely inclusion is crucial to expedite the integration process.
- **Support and Collaboration:** Collaboration between the Ministry of Ayush, the National Ayush Morbidity and Standardized Terminologies Electronic portal, and the Ayush Health Information Management System is vital in developing Module-2 for Ayurveda-related diagnostic systems.
- **Global Collaboration**: International collaboration with the WHO and other countries can further enhance the recognition and integration of traditional Indian medicine.

Nut Graf: The move to include Ayurveda and related traditional Indian systems of medicine in the ICD-11 is a significant step towards recognizing and standardizing these systems on the global stage. This not only provides a common language for healthcare

professionals but also supports research, regulation, and integration into mainstream healthcare. The collaboration between various entities and timely inclusion will be instrumental in achieving these goals and promoting traditional medicine's role in healthcare systems worldwide.

Nut Graf: *The introduction of the Green Credit program is a noteworthy step towards promoting environmentally responsible actions in India. By offering a market-based approach to incentivize activities that benefit the environment, this initiative can contribute significantly to addressing the country's environmental challenges. Proper execution, effective monitoring, and broad participation are essential for the program's success in fostering a greener and more sustainable India.*

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Centre unveils tradeable Green Credit

Syllabus: Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation

Prelims: Tradable Green Credit

Mains: Importance of tradeable Green Credit

Context: The Indian government has introduced a novel initiative aimed at promoting and incentivizing environmentally positive actions through the creation of "Green Credits." This program allows individuals and entities to earn Green Credits for specific activities that have a positive environmental impact, with the unique feature of trading these credits on a dedicated exchange.

Need for tradeable Green Credit:

- **Environmental Challenges:** The pressing environmental issues faced by India, including deforestation, water management, agricultural sustainability, waste management, air pollution, and conservation, necessitate innovative approaches to encourage positive actions.
- **Lack of Incentives:** Many environmentally beneficial activities often go unrewarded, which discourages participation and investment in these critical areas.

Significance:

- **Market-Based Incentives:** The Green Credit program leverages a competitive market-based approach to incentivize various stakeholders to engage in environmental actions.
- **Coverage:** The program encompasses a wide spectrum of activities, including tree plantation, water management, sustainable agriculture, waste management, air pollution reduction, and mangrove conservation and restoration.
- **Registration and Verification:** To earn Green Credits, participants must register their activities through a website, and a designated agency will verify the activities. Successful verification results in the issuance of a Green Credit certificate.
- **Trading Platform:** The creation of a dedicated trading platform for Green Credits facilitates the exchange and trading of these credits in a domestic market.

Solutions:

- **Broadened Participation:** The program should encourage wider participation from industries, companies, and entities by offering financial incentives for environmentally responsible actions.
- **Effective Monitoring:** Ensuring the activities registered for Green Credits are genuinely beneficial to the environment will be crucial. Strict monitoring and verification processes are needed.
- **Education and Awareness:** The government should conduct awareness campaigns to educate the public and stakeholders about the program's benefits and how it aligns with environmental goals.

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. How is the IORA a key bloc for India?

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Prelims: IORA

Mains: Importance of IORA for India

Context: 'Reinforcing Indian Ocean Identity' was the banner theme at the Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM) held in Colombo on October 11, that was attended by foreign ministers and senior officials of the 23-nation grouping of countries.

The IORA

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association includes 23 countries from Africa, West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, Australia and littoral states situated in and around the Indian Ocean.
- IORA's membership includes 23 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, the Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the UAE and Yemen.
- It also has 11 dialogue partners: China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Türkiye, the U.K. and the U.S.
- The grouping, whose apex body is the Council of Foreign Ministers that meet once a year, moves by rotation through members every two years.
- Sri Lanka took charge as Chair this year from Bangladesh, and India is Vice-Chair, meaning that the troika of IORA is within the South Asian region.
- While the IORA was formed in 1997 (then called the Indian Ocean Region-Association for Regional Cooperation) in Mauritius, its genesis came from a speech Nelson Mandela gave in Delhi in 1995.

Why does the Indian Ocean Region matter?

- A third of the world's population (2.6 billion people) live in the region, and 80% of global oil trade, 50% of the world's containerised cargo and 33% of its bulk cargo passes through it.
- The region produces a combined total of $1 trillion in goods and services and intra-IORA trade is billed at around $800 billion.
- While the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), has made progress, it remains U.S.-led, along with military allies Australia and Japan.
- Meanwhile, China is actively trying to rope in India's neighbours with groupings like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China-Indian Ocean

Region Forum on Development Cooperation, China-South Asian Countries Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Centre, which exclude India.

What does IORA focus on?

According to its charter, the IORA's seven priority areas are

- Maritime safety and security
- Trade and investment facilitation
- Fisheries management
- Disaster risk management
- Academic, science and technology
- Tourism and cultural exchanges
- Gender empowerment.
- The IORA also runs a special fund in addition, disbursing $80,000-$150,000 for project grants to members, and has a particular focus on climate change. It is clear that strategic issues and the importance of keeping a free and open sea lane, guarding against piracy, have become an integral part of the discussions.

Why does the Indian Ocean Region matter?

- **Growing Importance of the Indian Ocean Region:** The Indian Ocean region plays a critical role in global trade and security, with a substantial portion of the world's population residing in the area and significant international trade routes passing through it.
- **Big-Power Rivalries:** The strategic importance of the region has led to the involvement of major global powers, such as the United States and China, which compete for influence and control in the Indian Ocean.
- **Regional Cooperation:** IORA serves as a platform for regional cooperation, where member countries, including India, work together to address common challenges, promote economic growth, and enhance maritime security.
- **Safe Space for India:** IORA provides India with a "safe space" to engage in regional collaboration, free from the overt influence of big-power rivalries, unlike other groupings where India faces external pressures.
  - IORA membership is based on consensus, and Pakistan has not been admitted to the grouping since it first applied in 2001, on the basis that it has not extended MFN (most favoured nation) status to India, making the IORA a less contentious space for India as well, compared to groupings like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- **Maritime and Economic Focus:** The organization focuses on critical areas such as maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk management, academic and technological exchange, gender empowerment, and cultural exchanges, addressing both strategic and socioeconomic concerns.

Solutions:

- **Continued Engagement:** India should actively engage in IORA to promote regional stability and cooperation, emphasizing the significance of a free and open Indian Ocean that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- **Balanced Diplomacy:** India should pursue a balanced diplomatic approach, engaging with both Western powers and regional players, while keeping a focus on its regional priorities and interests within IORA.

Nut Graf: The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has evolved as a key forum for India to assert its regional influence and address challenges in the Indian Ocean region. It provides a platform for member countries to collaborate on issues of shared concern while preserving India's strategic autonomy and sovereignty. As the importance of the Indian Ocean region continues to grow, IORA remains an essential vehicle for India to engage with its regional partners, foster economic growth, and address strategic imperatives.

1. PM Modi confirms India's bid to host 2036 Olympics

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has publicly announced India's aspiration to host the 2036 Summer Olympics, marking a significant milestone for the country. India aims to become the fourth Asian nation to host this prestigious sporting event, although the specific host city remains undisclosed.

Significance:

- **Historic Aspiration:** India's bid for the 2036 Olympics is a historic moment as it reflects the country's ambition to host this global event, underlining the nation's growing stature in the world of sports.
- **Asian Representation:** If successful, India would join the select few Asian countries that have had the privilege of hosting the Olympics, emphasizing its commitment to sports and international cooperation.
- **National Dream:** PM Modi expressed the collective aspiration of 1.4 billion Indians to bring the Olympics to their country. The event embodies a dream cherished by millions.

Government Commitment:

- **Full Support:** The Indian government is committed to making the dream of hosting the 2036 Olympics a reality. PM Modi reiterated the country's enthusiasm and determination.
- **Youth Olympics**: India has also expressed its willingness to host the 2029 Youth Olympics, highlighting the government's focus on promoting sports among the youth.

Indian Culture and Sports:

- **Integral Part of Culture:** PM Modi emphasized the integral role of sports in Indian culture and lifestyle. Festivals and celebrations in Indian villages often revolve around sports, highlighting the deep-rooted love for sports in the country.
- **Promoting Development:** Sports development in India has been a priority, with initiatives such as the Khelo India Games, Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India Winter Games, and upcoming Khelo India Para Games. These efforts focus on nurturing talent and promoting a culture of sports.
- **Unifying Force:** Sports not only produce champions but also promote unity, peace, progress, and well-being. PM Modi acknowledged sports as a unifying force with the power to connect people worldwide.

IOC Session and Declaration:

- **40-Year Milestone:** PM Modi highlighted the significance of hosting the IOC session in India after 40 years, marking a pivotal moment for the country's sporting history.
- **Recent Victory:** The Prime Minister also celebrated India's victory against Pakistan in the World Cup in Ahmedabad, emphasizing the nation's sporting achievements.

Conclusion: This announcement marks a significant step in India's journey towards becoming a sports powerhouse and fostering international collaboration.

2. 'Ferry to Sri Lanka plies after 40 years

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated an international, high-speed passenger ferry service between Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu and Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka, marking the revival of a crucial connection after a hiatus of nearly four decades. The launch signifies a significant development in enhancing connectivity and strengthening diplomatic and economic ties between India and Sri Lanka.

Background:

- **Disruption of Connectivity:** The ferry service between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai was suspended for nearly four decades, disrupting a vital mode of connectivity between India and Sri Lanka.
- **Cultural and Economic Ties:** The interruption in connectivity hampered cultural, commercial, and civilisational ties between the two nations, affecting people-to-people interactions and economic opportunities.

Significance:

- **Enhanced Connectivity:** The resumption of the ferry service is not only about physical proximity but also symbolizes the bringing together of people, countries, and their hearts. It promotes trade, tourism, and people-to-people ties, creating new growth opportunities for the youth of both countries.
- **Historical Context:** The region, particularly Nagapattinam, has a rich history of maritime trade, and the revival of this service reflects the historical significance of the region in fostering international connections.
- **Diplomatic and Economic Ties:** The ferry service is viewed as a new chapter in diplomatic and economic relations between India and Sri Lanka. It strengthens cultural and commercial ties, aligning with the joint vision of the India-Sri Lanka economic partnership.

Conclusion: The relaunch of the ferry service between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai holds great significance as it reconnects two nations, people, and their hearts. This development not only enhances physical proximity but also strengthens diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties.

3. Red Fort to host India's maiden art, architecture and design biennale

Context: India's iconic Red Fort will transform into a hub of creativity and innovation when it hosts the country's first Art, Architecture, and Design Biennale from December 9 to 15, 2023. This cultural extravaganza will feature replicas of significant Indian buildings, thematic exhibitions, interactive installations, and panel discussions, aiming to celebrate the nation's rich architectural and design heritage.

Significance:

- **Maiden Biennale:** The India Art, Architecture, and Design Biennale, 2023 (IAADB) marks the country's first attempt to bring together art, architecture, and design under one roof, offering a unique platform for creative expression.

- **Immersive Experience:** The event promises a week-long immersion in creativity, featuring replicas of iconic structures, thematic exhibitions, interactive installations, and panel discussions.
- **Thematic Diversity:** The IAADB will explore a range of themes, from India's architectural wonders to indigenous design and the role of women in architecture and **design.**
- **Cultural Space at Red Fort:** This event introduces the cultural space at the Red Fort, opening the doors to the historic site for artistic and creative endeavors.

Status of Relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel Amid War

Why in News?

- According to the sources, Saudi Arabia is putting US-backed plans to normalise ties with Israel on ice, signalling a rapid rethink of its foreign policy priorities as war escalates between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas.

What's in Today's Article?

- What is the Potential Deal Between Israel and Saudi?
- How will the Formalisation of Ties with the Saudis help Israel?
- What's in the Deal for the United States?
- What would the Palestinians get in the Deal?
- Why is the US Pushing the Deal Now?
- Implications of the Israel-Hamas Conflict on the Saudi-Israel Deal

What is the Potential Deal Between Israel and Saudi?

- **The US has been working for months to broker a deal** that would improve relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.
- The highlight of the deal is that **Saudi Arabia will recognise Israel** for the first time since the latter's establishment in 1948.
  - The kingdom has so far shied away from formalising ties with the Jewish state primarily because of the Israel-Palestine conflict.
  - The Saudis have been demanding (since the beginning) Palestinian statehood.
- More than resolving the Palestinian question, **Riyadh now wants security guarantees from the US in exchange for recognising Israel**.
  - Specifically, **the kingdom seeks protection from Iran**, which has been its arch rival for decades now.
- **Saudi Arabia wants an agreement with the US** that would be as close as possible to a mutual defence pact - in which any attack on the kingdom would be seen by Washington as an attack on the US.
- **The deal also includes US support for a Saudi civilian nuclear programme** and US approval for the sale of sophisticated weapons to the kingdom.
- **Israel**, which is technologically advanced in a wide range of fields, will also help Riyadh move its economy beyond oil.

How will the Formalisation of Ties with the Saudis help Israel?

- Saudi Arabia is the richest and most powerful of the Arab countries. A formal relationship will bring **economic benefits to Israel**.

- **It would give legitimacy to the State of Israel** in the mostly-Muslim region and help the country become a significant player in West Asia.
- **The deal will bestow political gains upon Israel's PM**Benjamin Netanyahu, who is battling deep divisions in Israeli society over the policies of his far-right governing coalition, including attempts to muzzle Israel's judiciary.
    - A deal with Saudi Arabia would shift the focus to a source of national pride and unity.

What's in the Deal for the United States?

- **The US is looking at the growing Chinese influence in the region**. The US hopes that giving security guarantees to Saudi Arabia will stop the kingdom from getting closer to China.
    - Recently, **Beijing successfully mediated** an agreement that restored formal ties between the Saudis and Iran, long-time rivals in the region.
    - **This signalled the arrival of China as a global power-broker**, a role for which only the US has so far had the required influence and financial strength.
- **Washington also wants to improve its fraught relations with Riyadh**.
    - They have been traditional allies, but in recent years, the two countries have had several confrontations, including over the murder of US journalist (Jamal Khashoggi) by Saudi agents.

What would the Palestinians get in the Deal?

- **The Palestinians are not directly involved in the negotiations of the deal**.
    - But unlike the US-brokered **2020 Abraham Accords**, which helped Israel gain recognition from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, they haven't been completely sidelined.
- Saudi Arabia has publicly said it remains fully committed to the **2002 Arab Peace Initiative**, in which Arab nations offered Israel normalised ties in return for a statehood deal with the Palestinians, and full Israeli withdrawal from territory captured in 1967.
- However, Saudi Arabia has indicated that a deal is possible even if it falls short of providing Palestinians an independent state, **as the hope of a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict remains low**.

Why is the US Pushing the Deal Now?

- **A deal would be a huge foreign policy victory for Biden.**
    - President Joe Biden's administration wants Israel and Saudi Arabia to ink the deal before the US Presidential elections (in November next year) - the campaign for which will pick up speed by early summer.
- **Another factor is Iran**, which doesn't seem to agree to stop its nuclear programme.
    - This makes it all the more important for the US to strengthen ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel, both of whom see Iran as an enemy.

Implications of the Israel-Hamas Conflict on the Saudi-Israel Deal:

- There is no doubt that the war and Israel's ferocious counterattack **have thrown the deal timeline off-track**.

- It has also triggered sympathy for the Palestinians in the wider Arab world.
- On the day the attack began, **the Saudi Foreign Ministry blamed Israel**, saying the Saudi government had repeatedly warned of the dangers of the explosion of the situation.
- **The statement took President Biden and his aides by surprise** and angered American lawmakers, who have supported the deal.
    - It also cast a shadow over the chances of finalising the agreement any time soon.
- **This is probably exactly what Hamas and possibly Iran wanted**.

Writ Jurisdiction of High Courts

The Allahabad High Court recently refused to exercise its writ jurisdiction in a petition seeking compliance of a Supreme Court order.

About Writ Jurisdiction of High Courts:

- According to **Articles 12-35** of the Indian Constitution, **every citizen is given** a number of **Fundamental rights.**
- **Article 32 and Article 226** provide a **remedy for the protection of fundamental rights** by **allowing the Supreme Court and the High Court's, respectively**, **to issue writs**when a citizen's basic rights are violated.
- It allows the courts to **issue formal orders to the authorities in cases of violations of fundamental rights** by government authorities or government bodies.
- **Article 226 empowers the High Courts to issue writs not only for the enforcement** of **fundamental rights but also for any other legal right**. Thus, **writ jurisdiction of the High Court is wider than that of Supreme Court** (SC) because the **SC can issue writs only** for the **enforcement of fundamental rights** under Article 32.
- **The remedy** provided **under Article 226** of the Constitution **is a discretionary remedy** of the court and thereby **cannot be claimed as a matter of right**.
- Thus, **unlike the Supreme Court**, which m**ust issue writs when fundamental rights are violated** (since the right to approach the SC in case of a violation of a Fundamental Right is in itself a Fundamental Right), the **High Court has discretion** when granting writs.
- **Under Article** 226, a **writ petition can be filed before any High Court** within **whose jurisdiction the cause of action arises**, either wholly or in part.
- It is **immaterial if the authority against** whom the **writ petition is filed is within the territory** or not**.**

Types of writs mentioned in the Indian Constitution:

- **Habeas Corpus:**
    - 'Habeas Corpus' **literally means "to have a body of"**.
    - This writ is **used to release a person who has been unlawfully detained** or imprisoned.
    - By virtue of this writ, the **Court directs** the person so d**etained to be brought before it** to examine the legality of his detention.
    - **If the Court concludes** that the **detention was unlawful,**then it **directs the person to be released immediately.**
- **Mandamus:**
    - Mandamus' **means 'we command'**.
    - It is issued by the Court **to direct a public authority to perform the legal duties** which **it has not or refused to perform.**

- It can be **issued by the Court against a public official, public corporation**, tribunal, **inferior court** or the government.
  - It **cannot be issued against a private individual** or body, the **President** or **Governors** of States, or against a **working Chief Justices.**
- **Prohibition**:
  - **It is issued** by the High Court or the Supreme Court **to the subordinate court or** the **tribunal** to **prevent them from exceeding their jurisdiction** which hasn't been vested upon them under the law.
  - It **cannot be applied to statutory bodies, administrative agencies,** or private individuals or businesses.
  - **Only judicial and quasi-judicial organisations are subject to it.**
- **Certiorari**:
  - **It is issued** by the High Court or the Supreme Court **to the judicial or quasi-judicial authorities when such authority passes the order without having jurisdiction**in such case, exceeding the jurisdiction conferred upon it, **or when it violates the principle of natural justice.**
  - It is **issued against a lower court or tribunal** in order **to transfer the matter to another superior body** for careful consideration.
- **Quo Warranto:**
  - It is issued by the court **to inquire into the legality of the claim made by the person who is holding a public office.**
  - The **ministerial office cannot be the target** of it.
  - This writ is **used to determine who has the legal authority to hold a public office** in the event of a disagreement. Polity & Governance

What are Protists

A recent DNA analysis of a protist has revealed surprising deviations in the genetic code of a microscopic organism.

About Protists:

- Protists are a diverse collection of **organisms that do not fit into animal, plant, bacteria, or fungi groups.**
- Kingdom Protista is **one of the six kingdoms of life** (the others being Eubacteria, Archae, Fungi, Plantae, and Animalia).
- Protists are believed to be the common **ancestral link between plants, animals, and fungi** from which these three groups branched out in the process of evolution.
- Protists **are eukaryotes** as they **possess a nucleus and other membrane-bound organelles** (structures that perform a specific job).
- The **majority** of them **are unicellular,** like an amoeba; however, a **few protists are multicellular, like seaweed.**
- However, **multicellular protists do not have highly specialized tissues** or organs.
- **Most protists have mitochondria**, the organelle that generates energy for cells to use. The **exceptions are some protists that live in anoxic conditions** or environments lacking in oxygen.

- **Habitat**: Nearly all protists **exist in some type of aquatic environment**, including freshwater and marine environments, damp soil, and even snow.
- **Many protists**, such as algae, **are photosynthetic** and are vital primary producers in ecosystems.
- **Some protists are responsible for a range of serious human diseases,** such as **malaria** and **sleeping sickness**. Science & Tech

What is David's Sling?

Israel recently confirmed using its David's Sling air-defense system to intercept a Hamas rocket.

About David's Sling:

- It is an **Israeli medium-range air defense system**designed to **defeat short-range ballistic missiles,** large-caliber rockets, **and cruise missiles**.
- **Co-developed with the United States**, it occupies **middle part of Israel's** sophisticated and multi-layer **air-defense network**, between the point-defense Iron Dome and upper-tier Arrow systems.
- **Features:**
  - It incorporates a **vertical missile firing unit**, a **fire control radar**, a **battle management**/operator **station**, and the **Stunner interceptor.**
  - **Each firing uni**t can **hold up to 12 missiles.**
  - It is **designed to intercept** ballistic and cruise **missiles at ranges of 40 to 300 km.**
  - It **uses a three-pulse solid propellant motor** to reach **speeds of up to Mach 7.5;** its first two pulses accelerate the missile through its initial trajectory while the third activates to maneuver the interceptor and increase speed prior to intercept.
  - **Unlike Iron Dome's, Stunner has no warhead**, defeating targets by striking them directly.
  - **Each Stunner missile costs** an estimated **$1 million to produce.** Defence & Security

What is Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)?

Vice President of India recently interacted with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the sidelines of the G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20).

About Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU):

- IPU is the **international organization of Parliaments**.
- I was **established in 1889 in Paris** to **promote representative democracy** and **world peace.**
- The IPU **facilitates parliamentary diplomacy** and empowers parliaments and parliamentarians **to promote peace, democracy, and sustainable development** around the world.

- It was the **first multilateral political organization** in the world, **encouraging** cooperation and **dialogue between all nations.**
- **Slogan: "For democracy. For everyone"**
- Today, the IPU comprises **179 member parliaments** and **13 associate members.**
- It promotes democracy and h**elps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced,** and more diverse.
- It also **defends the human rights of parliamentarians**through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world.
- The IPU moved its **headquarters to Geneva** in 1921.
- **Funding**: The IPU is financed **primarily by its members out of public funds.**
- **Structure**:
  - **IPU Assembly:**
    - It is the **principal statutory body** that **expresses the views of the IPU** on political issues.
    - It **brings together parliamentarians to study international problems** and **make recommendations**for action.
  - **Governing Council:**
    - It is the **plenary policymaking body** of the IPU.
    - It is **composed of three representatives from each**member **parliament**.
    - The **President of the IPU is ex-officio President** of the Governing Council.
    - The Council **establishes the annual programme and budget** of the IPU.
    - Occasionally, the Council **considers substantive issues** and **adopts** thematic **resolutions and policy statements.**
    - A number of **committees and working groups are subordinated to it** and report to the Council on their work.
  - **Executive Committees:**
    - In accordance with the IPU statutes, this **17-member body oversees** the **administration of the IPU** and provides **advice to the Governing Council.**
    - The **15 members** of the Executive Committee **are elected by the Council for a four-year term.**
    - The **President of the IPU is an ex officio member and President** of the Committee.
  - **Standing Committees**: There are **three Standing Committees** set up by the IPU Governing Council to assist the Assembly in its work.
  - **Meeting of Women Parliamentarians:**
    - It is a **separate organ** of the IPU, which **meets on the occasion of the first round of Statutory Meetings of the IPU** and reports on its work to the Governing Council.
    - The meeting can be **attended by the parliamentarians of both sexes**.
    - **The agenda** of the meeting **includes one but not more than two substantive items** for debate, which **may relate to the competence of the Assembly.** International

Palk Strait

India and Sri Lanka recently launched a ferry service across the Palk Strait under a new roadmap for greater connectivity.

About Palk Strait:

- It is a strait that **lies between the Tamil Nadu** state of India **and** the island nation of **Sri Lanka.**
- The strait is **named after Robert Palk**, who was a **governor of Madras Presidency (1755-1763)** during the British Raj period.
- It is **bounded on the south by Pamban Island**(India), **Adam's (Rama's) Bridge** (a chain of shoals), the **Gulf of Mannar**, and **Mannar Island (Sri Lanka**).
- It **connects the Bay of Bengal** in the northeast **with the Gulf of Mannar** in the southwest.
- The **southwestern portion** of the strait is also **called Palk Bay.**
- The strait is **40 to 85 miles** (64 to 137 km) wide, **85 miles long,** and less than **330 feet (100 metres) deep.**
- **Several rivers flow** into it, including the **Vaigai River of Tamil Nadu.**
- The **port of Jaffna,** the commercial centre for northern Sri Lanka, **lies on the strait.**

Key Facts about Adam's Bridge:

- Adam's Bridge, also known as Rama's Bridge or Rama Setu, is a c**hain of limestone shoals, between Pamban Island**, also known as **Rameswaram Island**, off the south-eastern coast **of Tamil Nadu**, India, **and Mannar Island**, off the north-western **coast of Sri Lanka.**
- Geological evidence suggests that this bridge is a **former land connection between India and Sri Lanka.**
- The bridge is **50 km long** and **separates the Gulf of Mannar** (south-west) **from the Palk Strait** (northeast).
- Some of the sandbanks are dry, and the **sea in the area is very shallow**, being only 1 to 10 metres deep in places, **which hinders navigation**.
- Scientists believe Ram Setu is a **natural structure formed due to tectonic movements** and sand getting trapped in corals.
- The structure has significance in both Hindu and Muslim mythology. While the **Hindus believe this is the bridge built by Lord Ram and his army to cross to Lanka and fight Ravan**, as per **Islamic legend, Adam used this bridge to reach Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka**, where he stood on one foot for 1,000 years in repentance. Geography

Saraswati Samman Award

Recently, Tamil writer Sivasankari was presented with the 'Saraswati Samman' 2022 for her book of memoirs Surya Vamsam.

About Saraswati Samman Award:

- It is given annually for **outstanding literary works in 22 Indian languages** in the last 10 years.
- It is among the highest recognitions in the **field of Indian literature.**
- The selection follows a **rigorous three-tier process** leading up to a final decision by Chayan Parishad
- It was instituted by the **K. Birla Foundation.** (**the Vyas Samman**and **the Bihari Puraskar** are other literary awards instituted by the foundation.)
- It carries a citation, a plaque and **prize money of 15 lakh rupees.**

Other works of Sivasankari

- Sivasankari's literary career spans over five decades. She is the author of 36 novels, 48 novellas, 150 short stories, 15 travelogues, seven collections of essays, and three biographies.
- Her 2019 memoir, **Surya Vamsam, unfolds in two volumes**-- the first is the metamorphosis from a child to a young writer, and the second is the life and times of an acclaimed author spreading her wings. Awards and Recognitions

Amur falcon

The Manipur Forest Department will carry out a head count of Amur falcons-the world's longest travelling raptors- in Tamenglong district.

About Amur falcon:

- It is a **small raptor** of the falcon family.
- Locally known **as Akhuipuina**, the bird arrives mainly in Manipur and Nagaland.
- They breed in **south-eastern Siberia** and **Northern China**and migrate long distances in large flocks to **winter in Southern and East Africa.**
- The one-way journey via India is about **20,000 km long and the birds do this twice a year.**
- **Conservation efforts:**
  - It is protected under **the Wildlife Protection Act 1972** and included under its **Schedule IV.**
  - Hunting of the birds or possessing its meat is punishable with imprisonment up to **three years or a fine upto 25,000 or with bonds.**
  - In 2018, the forest department started a conservation programme by radio-tagging the birds to study their migratory route.
  - **IUCN:** Least Concern.
- **Threats:** Illegal trapping and killing during migration, habitat loss from agricultural practices and land reclamation. Environment

INS Sagardhwani

Recently, INS Sagardhwani, an oceanographic research vessel embarked on a two-month long Sagar Maitri (SM) Mission-4 from South Jetty, Southern Naval Command (SNC), Kochi.

About INS Sagardhwani:

- It is a **marine acoustic research ship** designed and developed by Naval Physical & Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of DRDO, Kochi and constructed indigenously by GRSE Ltd.
- It was launched in July 1994.

- The NPOL is involved in studying the ocean environment and other related fields.
- The vessel has been engaging in extensive oceanic **observing missions and research for the last 25 years.**

What is Sagar Maitri?

- It is a novel **initiative of the Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO).
- It supports the broad objective of India's policy declaration 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)' to promote **closer cooperation in socio-economic aspects**as well as more significant **scientific interaction**, especially in ocean research among **Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries.**
- Under the aegis of this policy, DRDO initiated a **scientific component named 'MAITRI** (Marine and Allied Interdisciplinary Training and Research Initiative)', which focuses on establishing long-term collaboration with IOR **countries in the field of 'Ocean Research and Development'.**
- The missions aim to **establish long-term scientific partnerships** and collaborations with Oman, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Myanmar — the eight IOR countries.
- The **current mission (SM-4)** plan includes scientific deployments onboard INS Sagardhwani in the **Northern Arabian Sea** and initiating collaborative research programmes with the Department of Marine Sciences & Fisheries at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.
- These missions give the scientists an opportunity to cooperate and build strong working relationships with their IOR counterparts studying the oceans. Defence & Security

Grey whales

As per a new study, population swings in eastern North Pacific grey whales — some of which have resulted in recent mass mortality events — are driven by changing prey biomass and ice cover in the Arctic.

About Grey whales:

- Gray whales have a **hump and a ridge of sharp bumps along their backs**, instead of a dorsal fin.
- They are a **type of baleen whale**, which means they **filter food from the water** through special bristly structures in their mouths.
- They stay close to **shore and feed in shallow water.**
- They are found mainly in **shallow coastal waters in the North Pacific Ocean**, although during migration, they do sometimes cross deep waters far from shore.
- There **are two geographic distributions of gray whales** in the North Pacific:
  - The **eastern North Pacific stock** or DPS, found along the west coast of North America.
  - The **western North Pacific stock** or DPS, primarily found along the coast of eastern Asia.
- **Migration journey**
  - They are well-known for migrations that take them between feeding and breeding areas, swimming as much as 12,000 miles round trip.

- Western gray whales migrate into their summer feeding grounds near **Sahkalin Island, Russia** in late May or early June and return to their winter feeding grounds in the South China Sea in late autumn.
- Summer feeding grounds for the eastern population lie in the **Bering and Chukchi Seas between Alaska and Russia.**
- In the winter, these eastern gray whales migrate south along the west coast of the US to Mexico to breed and have their calves.
- **Conservation status**
  - **IUCN:** Western Grey whale (**Critically endangered)** and Eastern Grey whale **(Least concern)** `Environment`

Hepatitis C

According to the World Health Organisation WHO Egypt became the first country to achieve "gold tier" status on the path to elimination of hepatitis C as per the global health body criteria.

About Hepatitis C:

- It is a **viral infection that affects the liver.**
- It can cause both acute (short term) and chronic (long term) illness. It can be life-threatening.
- **Transmission:**
  - It is spread through **contact with infected blood.**
  - This can happen through sharing needles or syringes, or from unsafe medical procedures such as blood transfusions with unscreened blood products.
  - It can be passed **from an infected mother to her baby** and via sexual practices that lead to exposure to blood.
  - Hepatitis C is **not spread through breast milk**, food, water or casual contact such as hugging, kissing and sharing food or drinks with an infected person.
- **Symptoms**: It can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine and yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice).
- **Geographical distribution**
  - This virus infection **occurs in all WHO regions.**
  - The highest burden of disease is in **the Eastern Mediterranean Region** and **European Region.**
- New HCV infections are usually asymptomatic, few people are diagnosed when the infection is recent.
- In those people who develop chronic HCV infection, **the infection is often undiagnosed** because **it remains asymptomatic until decades** after infection when symptoms develop secondary to serious liver damage.
- **There is no vaccine for hepatitis C**, but it can be **treated with antiviral medications**.

What is Gold tier status?

- It includes meeting **specific criteria** such as
  - Ensuring **100% blood and injection safety**, maintaining a minimum of 150 needles/syringes per year for people who inject drugs (PWID)

- **Diagnosis** of over **80% of people living with chronic hepatitis C virus** (HCV),
- Treating of over 70% of individuals diagnosed with HCV.
- The establishing of a **sentinel surveillance Programme** for hepatitis sequelae, including liver can `Health`

G20 Parliamentary Speakers Summit

Why in news?

- The Ninth G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (**P20 Summit**) was hosted by Parliament of India in cooperation with IPU on 13-14 October 2023 in New Delhi.
  - The P20 Summit was established in Canada in 2010.
  - It aims to strengthen parliaments to make them more representative and effective.
- During the summit, India registered its protest on the European Parliament's recent move to bring a resolution on the Manipur issue.

What's in today's article?

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- Background: European Parliament's resolution on the Manipur issue
- News Summary

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

- **About**
  - The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments.
  - It began in 1889 as a small group of parliamentarians. It has since grown into a truly global organization with 179 Members and 14 Associate Members.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Slogan:** For democracy. For everyone.
- **IPU's goals**
  - Promoting representative democracy and world peace
  - Encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations
  - Contributing to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions
  - Strengthening and developing the means of action of representative institutions
  - Empowering parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy, and sustainable development

Background: European Parliament's resolution on the Manipur issue

- In July 2023, the European Parliament adopted a motion urging the Indian government to promptly halt the ongoing ethnic clashes in Manipur, and protect its religious minorities.
- The legislative body of the European Union also denounced in the strongest terms nationalistic rhetoric deployed by leading members of a national party currently in the government.
- **Key highlights of the resolution**
  - **Protect all religious minorities**
    - The final EP resolution asks the government to protect all religious minorities, such as Manipur's Christian community, and to pre-empt any further escalation.
  - **Unhindered access to the area**

- It also calls on authorities to grant unhindered access to the area by journalists and international observers and to end internet shutdowns.
  - **Repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act** in line with the recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review.
  - It called on E.U. to **make human rights prominent** in its dialogue and relationship with India.
- **Response of Indian Government**
  - The move was rejected by India as <u>unacceptable and a reflection of colonial mindset</u>. India had said that it has been made clear to EU parliamentarians concerned that **it is a matter absolutely internal to India**.

News Summary: G20 Parliamentary Speakers Summit

- The 9th P20 Summit was held in New Delhi. It was hosted by the <u>Parliament of India under the framework of India's G20 Presidency</u>.
- The **theme of the summit** was "Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future".

Key highlights

- **India registered its protest**
  - On the European Parliament's recent move to bring a resolution on the Manipur issue.
    - India insisted that <u>every nation and parliament is sovereign and their internal issues should not be discussed by other</u>
  - Lok Sabha Speaker brought up the issue during a bilateral meeting with European Union Vice-President on the sidelines.
- **Operation Dost as a symbol of India's friendship towards Turkey**
  - During his talks with his Turkish counterpart, Lok Sabha Speaker mentioned Operation Dost as a symbol of India's friendship towards Turkey.
  - Operation Dost was a search and rescue operation initiated by the Government of India to aid Syria and Turkey after the 2023 Turkey–Syria earthquake.
- **Unanimously adopts Joint Statement**
  - The participating Presiding Officers unanimously adopted a Joint Statement under the Chairmanship of Lok Sabha Speaker.
  Polity & Governance

Teesta-III Dam Break: NHPC Admits damage, 9 Years Ago it said no Threat

Why in News?

- Responding to the Teesta-III dam break due to the glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF), the National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued notices to 3 key stakeholders including National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- Not so long ago, the same NHPC had dismissed any threats from GLOF and the tribunal had accepted this explanation.

What's in Today's Article?

- What is the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?
- What is the Teesta-III Dam Project?
- News Summary

What is the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?

- The NGT has been established in **2010** under **the National Green Tribunal Act 2010** for -
  - Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
  - Enforcement of any legal right relating to the environment.
  - Giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property, etc.
- **It is a specialised body** equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure 1908, but shall be guided by principles of **natural justice**.
- The Tribunal's dedicated jurisdiction in environmental matters **shall provide speedy environmental justice and help reduce the burden of litigation** in the higher courts.
- The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally **within 6 months of filing of the same**.
- **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four place of sitting of the Tribunal.

What is the Teesta-III Dam Project?

- Teesta Low Dam - III Hydropower Plant is a **run-of-the-river hydroelectric station** built on the **Teesta River**. It is located in **Reang, Kalimpong district of West Bengal.**
- Unit I and II of the Teesta Project were commissioned in (January) 2013 and Unit III and IV in (February and March) 2013 respectively.
- **The state of West Bengal is the sole beneficiary of this power station**. With the construction of the project the area is also benefited by development infrastructure, education, medical facilities and employment avenues.

News Summary:

- **The GLOF that washed away the 1200-MW Teesta-III** in the early hours of October 4 caused severe damage to two NHPC projects: 510 MW Teesta-V and the under-construction 500 MW Teesta-VI — downstream.
  - According to official estimates, 37 deaths have been confirmed until October 13 while 30 are in hospital and 78 are missing.
- **The NGT issued notices to 3 key stakeholders:** the Sikkim government; the Sikkim Urja Limited that developed and ran Teesta-III at Chungthang; and NHPC.
- **In 2014**, when NHPC's 520 MW Teesta-IV project faced a challenge to its environmental clearance, NHPC (in an affidavit to the NGT) said that projects below Chungthang (Teesta-III) faced no threat from GLOFs.
- Apparently convinced, **the NGT dismissed the appeal** against Teesta-IV's environment clearance in 2017.
- Subsequently that year, 3 Lepcha gram panchayats had raised questions regarding the manner in which the district administration had furnished consent under the **Forest Rights Act** for Teesta-IV final forest clearance which is still awaited.